

Infectious diseases: manual for nonexperts

Clinical Manual of Infectious Disease. Edited by Michael W. Rytel and William J. Mogabgab. 524 pp. Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago. 1984. \$20. ISBN 0-9151-7492-6

As stated by Rytel and Mogabgab in the preface, this book is meant to fill a gap in the spectrum of books on infectious disease, which ranges "from encyclopedic tomes to skimpy outlines". Thirty-seven authors have contributed to the book, which perhaps accounts for the inconsistencies in structure and style.

Although there are no section headings, the contents do appear to be divided into several sections. The first covers basic concepts and comprises three chapters: "The pathogens: basic concepts", "The immune system" and "Epidemiologic principles in the control of infectious diseases". The second section deals with infections of organ systems such as the central nervous system and the respiratory tract.

The next sections are somewhat more difficult to define; they appear to be a heterogeneous mixture of special situations dealing with clinical infections, special microbiologic issues, and diagnosis and prophylaxis.

The book is written for nonexperts. Therefore, a fairly uniform, standard approach to the issues would have been best when possible; for example, the format etiology, epidemiology, pathophysiology and so forth in the study of organ system infections would have been of some help to the reader.

The book would have been better organized from the nonexpert's point of view if the chapters on diagnostic techniques, antibiotics

and prophylaxis were included in the first section and those on special clinical situations, such as obstetric and gynecologic infections, fever of unknown origin, special pediatric problems and infections in compromised hosts, were in another.

To their credit, however, Rytel and Mogabgab have managed to produce a nicely packaged manual that appears to meet their objectives. It is brief and to the point, emphasizing pragmatism rather than scholarly dissertation. The book will be of interest to house officers and family practitioners who want a quick overview of the clinical issues in infectious disease.

Lionel A. Mandell, MD, FRCPC
Associate professor of medicine
Head, Division of Infectious Disease
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ont.

From baby boom to baby bust

Current Demographic Analysis. Fertility in Canada: From Baby-Boom to Baby-Bust. A. Romaniuc. 156 pp. Illust. Ministry of Supply and Services, Ottawa. 1984. \$8.85. ISBN 0-660-11330-9

I found this to be a comprehensible and fascinating book, particularly for those wishing to become acquainted with the social and economic implications of fertility trends for the quality of life and the distribution of resources to Canadians. The text is easily understandable and is accompanied by excellent tables and graphs.

Romaniuc's examination of the fertility trends in Canada reveals an all-time low fertility rate in 1984 of 1.7 births per woman (baby bust), compared with the rapid increase in

the fertility rate after World War II to 4.0 births per woman (baby boom) in the 1950s. The current low rate can be attributed to many factors. Fewer people are marrying, and those who do marry do it later in life. The divorce rate has also increased considerably. The delay in parenting has resulted in altered patterns of childbearing: fewer children spaced further apart. The incidence of unplanned births has decreased markedly because of the availability of highly effective contraceptive methods and therapeutic abortion. More couples are choosing not to have children for reasons related to economics, careers and lifestyles. Teenage pregnancies and out-of-wedlock births are an increasing problem in the 1980s. Romaniuc discusses the implication of these factors for education and for economic and social aspects of Canadian life.

The patterns of use of contraceptive methods as they relate to planned parenthood are examined. Of interest is the increasing use of sterilization. Abortion remains a controversial yet frequently used solution to unplanned pregnancies or failed contraception.

The decline in the Canadian fertility rate has also been attributed to the expansion of the roles women play in society, whereby motherhood and a career compete for their time, energy, and social and psychologic aspirations.

Romaniuc then analyses present-day demographic trends and forecasts those that may result in a "no-growth situation" by the turn of the century. Planning strategies for Canada's growth may involve changes in immigration policies or in the allocation of public funds.

The penultimate chapter explores the demographic implications of the decreasing fertility rate by means of

a population growth model and reveals how deeply the variations in fertility rate affect the growth and age of the population as well as individual families. Public reaction to procreative incentives is also surveyed and analysed.

The final chapter, on international fertility trends, demonstrates that this situation is present in all industrial countries. Strategies for addressing the decreasing birth rates and mechanisms for assessing the effect of procreative actions are discussed.

This book is not just a statistical review; it is a realistic analysis of the problems facing Canada in an era of zero population growth. "Fertility in Canada" presents a review that is of immense importance and should be read by health care professionals, educators, economists, politicians and social planners.

B. Norman Barwin, MD
770 Broadview Ave.
Ste. B-1
Ottawa, Ont.

Successful retirement

An Ounce of Prevention: the Canadian Guide to a Healthy and Successful Retirement. Michael Gordon. 264 pp. Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., Scarborough, Ont. \$12.95. ISBN 0-13-6437-680

The average Canadian retires with more than 20% of his or her life left to be lived, and a lot of retired people may be at the height of intellectual and emotional maturity. For many people the move into this cycle of life is fraught with anxieties and nagging feelings about what is going to happen.

In "An Ounce of Prevention" noted geriatrician Michael Gordon offers a complete blueprint to help the body, the mind and the personality plan for the changes of retirement. His book is lucid, witty and well organized. Its topics range from housing and hobbies to anxiety, sexuality and family concerns. The three main parts of the book deal with a successful retirement and a positive lifestyle, the medical adviser, and the financial and legal adviser.

I especially enjoyed Gordon's catchy chapter "For better or for worse, but not for lunch: helping your spouse handle your free time". Gordon considers not only the retiree, but also the spouse and other family members. He makes practical comments about family expectations of where and how the retiree will live. The readers will find advice on and help in preparing a schedule of good health maintenance and practice. Gordon answers the question How can I make sure life will be worth living in my later years?

My only criticism of this well written book is that it should not be limited to a "Canadian guide", as its advice is universal.

Arthur Dodek, MD, FRCPC
505-1160 Burrard St.
Vancouver, BC

Hyponatremia

Understanding Water, Electrolyte and Acid-Base Balance. Peter Richards and Bruno Truniger. 171 pp. William Heinemann Medical Books, London. 1983. Price not available. ISBN 0-433-27593-6

This short European text is aimed at medical students and house officers and is intended to provide "a clinically oriented theoretical account of this complex subject, and the framework for sensible action in individual clinical problems".

Richards and Truniger begin their book with a chapter titled "The boundaries of disturbance", which is intended to portray normal features of electrolyte and fluid volume homeostasis. Overall, the text is difficult to follow: some of the information is presented graphically, whereas other related information is presented in the text. Some reasonably complex physiologic data are handled in survey form without accompanying references, so that they are of little value. Also, some of the statements are incorrect; for example, it is stated that "measurement of 24-hour urinary excretion of electrolytes is generally of no value unless the intake is known and excretion by other normal and abnormal routes is measured".

In the chapter on water the rare

syndromes of water excess due to excessive drinking are accorded an inappropriate degree of attention, while the more common cause of hyponatremia, impaired free-water excretion, is handled superficially and without any physiologic detail. The important entity of diuretic-associated hyponatremia is not mentioned, and the authors fail to provide a comprehensive list of other medications that may lead to hyponatremia through other mechanisms. They vastly overstate the frequency with which the syndrome of inappropriate release of antidiuretic hormone is observed.

Similar deficiencies plague other chapters. For example, one table lists the major conditions in which potassium regulation is disturbed; however, there does not seem to be any physiologic basis to it. The importance of sodium delivery in mediating potassium secretion is not emphasized, and important disorders such as hypomagnesemia resulting in potassium wasting are not mentioned. The table also contains conceptual errors, the terms alkalosis and acidosis being used instead of the correct terms alkalemia and acidemia. The complex topics of magnesium and phosphorus metabolism are handled in four pages, thus providing little useful information.

The chapter on acid-base imbalances is atavistic in its approach and in several areas is incorrect. Richards and Truniger fail to describe the approach to acid-base imbalances based on the Henderson equation and a knowledge of the compensatory mechanisms for primary acid-base disorders, stating that "this method is currently not widely used in clinical medicine in European countries and is therefore not discussed in more detail in this introductory text". However, it is the current method of approaching acid-base problems in North America.

In summary, I do not recommend this book to anyone who is studying water, electrolyte and acid-base balance, irrespective of his or her level of training.

Robert Bear, MD, FRCPC, FACP
Division of Nephrology
St. Michael's Hospital
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ont.